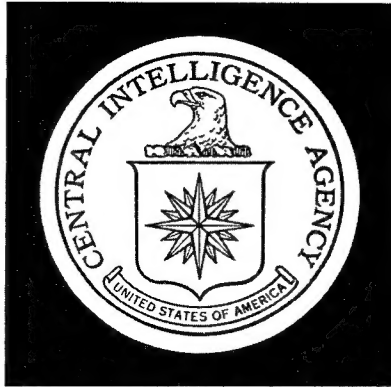


Top Secret (15)

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Numerous scattered skirmishes were reported on 19 January as Operation CEDAR FALLS continued to sweep the Iron Triangle area north of Saigon (Paras. 1-2). A US Marine company was attacked by Communist elements near the DMZ in northernmost Quang Tri Province (Paras. 3-4). Near Hue, in Thua Thien Province, a Marine patrol reported two successful encounters on 18 January and killed 12 Communists (Para. 5). The Viet Cong attempted to establish a new regiment in the Saigon area but have been forced to abandon the plan (Paras. 6-8).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

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Premier Ky's tour of Australia is going quite well (Para. 4). The Viet Cong have stated that any negotiations to extend the Tet cease-fire should be conducted with the Liberation Front, and not with North Vietnam as suggested in a recent allied offer (Paras. 5-6).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
Two US aircraft were lost in raids over North Vietnam on 19 January (Paras. 1-2).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Numerous small skirmishes were reported on 19 January as US and South Vietnamese troops in Operation CEDAR FALLS pressed their search for Viet Cong soldiers and base areas scattered throughout the area known as the Iron Triangle. Guam-based B-52 bombers supporting this vast sweep operation destroyed 12 buildings, 59 bunkers, many trenches, and three tunnels during a raid on 19 January.

2. Communist losses since this operation began on 7 January number 524 killed and 85 captured. Forty-three Communist suspects have been detained. American casualties are 53 killed and 282 wounded. More than 1,000 tactical air strikes have supported this multibattalion allied operation.

3. A US Marine company was attacked by small-arms fire and grenades in an area of northernmost Quang Tri Province near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on 18 January. The marines counter-attacked with small-arms and mortar fire, but results are unknown. Ten Americans were wounded during the brief encounter.

4. This marine unit was participating in the four-battalion search-and-destroy Operation PRAIRIE which has been maintaining defensive positions and patrolling the area south of the DMZ since 3 August. Heavy rains and few enemy redeployments in the area have been responsible for the relatively low amount of military activity in recent months. Communist losses now total 1,352 killed and 13 captured compared with American losses of 223 killed and 1,101 wounded.

5. In Thua Thien Province, a US Marine patrol reported two successful engagements with Communist troops early on 19 January. Twelve enemy soldiers were killed as a result of the encounters, which occurred about 15 miles southeast of Hue. There were no American casualties.

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Viet Cong Attempts to Create A New Regiment

6. Preliminary assessment of captured enemy documents and interrogations of prisoners during Operation CEDAR FALLS indicate that the Viet Cong Regional Headquarters of the Saigon - Gia Dinh Special Zone (also called Military Region IV) attempted to establish a new regiment in 1966 but, because of difficulties encountered, was forced to abandon its plan in December 1966.

7. In July 1966, the Special Zone attempted to create a four-battalion regiment using two existing battalions as its base. In December 1966, the Viet Cong apparently concluded that, because of the situation in the Special Zone, concentrating of forces was dangerous and the regimental headquarters was deactivated. Although the documents and prisoners did not so specify, it is also possible that the Viet Cong were unable to fill the ranks of the new units. The existing battalions were not assigned to guerrilla units but were returned to the control of the military affairs section of the Special Zone.

8. There are other indications from the documents that the 165A Regiment, traditionally the main force regiment of the Special Zone, no longer exists, and that its battalions, which have always operated in squad- and company-size units in the districts, have now come under control of the district committees.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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Premier Ky's Australian Tour Proceeding Relatively Smoothly

4. Reports thus far indicate that Premier Ky's visit to Australia is proceeding exceedingly well, with only minor and subdued anti-Ky demonstrations, Ky's first television speech was well received, and the attitude of the Australian press appears to be mellowing rapidly. There is evidently a growing feeling that Prime Minister Holt is being vindicated in his refusal to submit to opposition demands that Ky's invitation to Australia be withdrawn.

Viet Cong Comment on Allied Offer to Negotiate Extended Tet Truce

5. A Viet Cong Liberation Radio broadcast on 18 January declared that if negotiations to extend

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the Tet truce were held, they should be with the Liberation Front because North Vietnam has nothing to do with the fighting in South Vietnam. The broadcast also denounced the four-day allied truce, and stated that the Front would attempt to implement its seven-day cease-fire. The commentary concluded with a suggestion that individual Viet Cong and South Vietnamese units negotiate seven-day truces at the local level.

6. Radio Hanoi earlier denounced the allied truce, but ignored the offer to negotiate a longer, properly supervised cease-fire. Both Communist replies were in answer to a recent South Vietnamese Government announcement reaffirming its original four-day cease-fire plan for the holiday, but with an offer to negotiate a longer cease-fire with North Vietnam.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. A US Navy A-6 aircraft was destroyed by North Vietnamese ground fire during a raid on the Dong Phong Thuong transportation complex on 19 January. The plane burst into flames shortly after firing on the target. The type of enemy weapon responsible for the shoot-down could not be determined. Aircraft participating in the raid had received electronic warning of SAM launches, but no missiles were actually observed. Returning pilots reported encountering a substantial amount of conventional AAA fire at the time the plane was lost.

2. An Air Force F-4 was also lost to an undetermined type of ground fire while providing escort for an RF-101 photoreconnaissance mission near Kep Airfield on the same date. The returning airmen reported multiple SAM firings and heavy AAA fire directed at their flight, but could not state with certainty which Communist weapon was responsible for the loss.

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